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NEWS RELEASE

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Arm Yourself: Get Your Seasonal Flu Vaccination Today!

Early shipments of seasonal flu vaccine are arriving in Idaho, prompting public health officials to urge people to receive a seasonal flu vaccine to protect themselves and their families. Seasonal flu vaccine is currently available at many private providers, retail stores with pharmacies, and Idaho public health districts.

Often, seasonal flu vaccine does not become available until October, but this year vaccine is available in many locations now. "Vaccines are the best way to protect yourself and your children from the flu," says Dr. Christine Hahn, M.D., State Health Officer. "With the potential for both seasonal flu and pandemic flu viruses circulating this year, we highly recommend everyone receive the seasonal flu vaccine as soon as possible. We are extremely fortunate to have the vaccine available this early in the season, so we urge people to take advantage of the opportunity."

Each year, seasonal flu accounts for over 200,000 U.S. hospitalizations, and contributes to the deaths of an estimated 36,000 people nationwide. The seasonal flu vaccine is especially important for people with greater health risks. These include:

- Children ages 6 months up to their 19th birthday
- Pregnant women
- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, heart or lung diseases.
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including:
 - Health care workers;
 - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu; and
 - Household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these infants are too young to be vaccinated)

The pandemic flu vaccine is anticipated to be available in limited quantities in October. Testing of the pandemic vaccine is being conducted, and health officials do not know how much vaccine will be available. This is why it is imperative for people to receive the seasonal flu vaccine today.

(more)

“Much of the public and media focus is on the pandemic flu vaccine, but the seasonal flu can be just as serious, especially for children, people with underlying medical conditions and people over the age of 50,” Dr. Hahn says. “We know that people can catch both seasonal and pandemic flu, so we strongly urge people to schedule a vaccine now for the seasonal flu, and over the next month or so, we will learn more about the pandemic vaccine.”

People are urged to contact their local healthcare provider to schedule a seasonal flu vaccine. If they do not have a healthcare provider, they can find available clinics in their area through www.flucliniclocator.org or www.findaflushot.com

For more information about the influenza in Idaho, please visit www.flu.idaho.gov. For information about novel H1N1 pandemic flu, www.panfluidaho.org.

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(Editors: For more information please contact DHW Public Information Officer Tom Shanahan at 208-334-0668.)